

NAVY MEDICINE MAGAZINE

THE OFFICIAL SITE OF U.S. NAVY AND MARINE CORPS MEDICINE NEWS

NEWS FEATURES A LOOK BACK SCRUBBING IN I AM NAVY MEDICINE

NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS



NH Beaufort SAFE team goes the extra mile to protect patients

BY VJOHNSON – APRIL 7, 2014

POSTED IN: NEWS

By Naval Hospital Beaufort Public Affairs



Lt. j.g. Victoria Holzapfel, Naval Hospital (NH) Beaufort Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program manager; Sonja Strickland, NH Beaufort Sexual Assault Response Coordinator; Dr. Gina Jordan, NH Beaufort Emergency Room; and Ashley Hildreth, Beaufort Memorial Hospital (BMH) Emergency Room nurse, discuss a memorandum of understanding that will allow the NH Beaufort SAFE team to utilize the BMH facilities to conduct exams. (Photo provided by NH Beaufort Public Affairs)

When someone reports a sexual assault, a swift and thorough investigation is essential in ensuring justice is done. That's where the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) come into play.

"SAFEs care for patients who have been victims of sexual assault," said Lt. j.g. Victoria Holzapfel, sexual assault nurse examiner and Naval Hospital Beaufort SAFE program manager. "We collaborate with a multidisciplinary group of professionals – not only with physicians, but victim advocates, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, law enforcement, NCIS, Victim Legal Counsel, JAGs, and mental health as well."

Essentially, SAFE teams provide medical forensic examinations, which include medical history, physical assessment, written and photographic documentation of any injuries, and the collection and management of forensic samples. They also sometimes testify in court cases, requiring them to ensure the proper chain of custody and integrity of any samples collected. However, Holzapfel says SAFEs are first and foremost healthcare providers, and as a result, operate without bias whether dealing with a potential victim or suspect. In fact, Holzapfel says that terms such as "victim" and suspect" don't apply to SAFE examiners.



Recent Posts

- I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- 'Unwavering Strength' for a New Year, New You
- I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- Independent Duty Corpsman – A Specialized Lifesaver
- NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

Recent Comments

- Jami Mesgar on 'Unwavering Strength' for a New Year, New You
- Chuck Bryan on I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- Richard G. Shuster on A brief history of the U.S. Navy Independent Duty Corpsman
- Anna Schwarz on I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- Shannon Dittlinger on I AM NAVY MEDICINE

Archives

- January 2015
- December 2014
- November 2014
- September 2014
- August 2014
- July 2014
- June 2014
- May 2014
- April 2014
- March 2014
- February 2014
- January 2014
- December 2013
- November 2013
- October 2013

Categories

- A LOOK BACK
- FEATURES
- I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

“In our exam room, we have patients. That is all,” she said. “Ultimately, our only client is the evidence that we collect.”

Of course, that’s not to say that SAFE examiners maintain a cold or clinical detachment when dealing with patients. Instead, they try to present a calm and relaxed environment.

“All members of our team – examiners and assistants – wear scrubs instead of uniforms throughout the exam,” Holzapfel said. “We also use first names only between each other; no ranks, and no last names.”

Naval Hospital Beaufort’s SAFE team prides itself on not only maintaining, but surpassing standards when it comes to training. According to Holzapfel, in addition to the minimum required training, The Naval Hospital Beaufort team is also developing and implementing best practices in order to provide a more efficient service.

“At the end of January, I taught a two-day course for my examiners and assistants, covering topics that the [standard trainings] do not sufficiently address. Later this month, there will be additional hands-on training with genital models, as well as familiarization with the full-circle SAFE process here at NHB,” she said.

It’s these extra steps that make the NH Beaufort SAFE team so proficient at their jobs, Holzapfel says, and just one of the many reasons they should be used to conduct examinations over civilian providers.

“Whether active duty or an adult dependent, we understand this patient population on a deeper level than any civilian examiner does,” she said. “Even the smallest detail like a patient describing ‘the head’ or ‘the bulkhead’ – which may not be immediately understood by a civilian provider – can go a long way in establishing rapport and ensuring the patient feels comfortable and safe.”



About vjohnson

- [NEWS](#)
- [SCRUBBING IN](#)

Meta

- [Log in](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [WordPress.org](#)